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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
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May 20, 2011

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
2301 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

We respectfully urge you to fund the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in the FY2012 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for \$15 million, the same level of funding that was appropriated in FY 2009 and 2010. This program is critical to 240,000 children in the child welfare system who have CASA volunteers appointed on their behalf, and to expand volunteer advocacy to children without CASA volunteers.

CASA volunteers receive training and are appointed by judges to represent the interests of foster children removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. With the sustained economic downturn, last year CASA volunteers reported seeing more difficult cases with fewer services available to children in the foster care system. Grants from CASA were the lifeline to help local programs maintain staffing levels and continue serving children.

A relatively small federal investment in the CASA program leverages the time, energy and compassion of over 75,000 volunteers across the country. Independent researchers found that a CASA volunteer spends significantly more time in contact with a child than paid advocates, and in four out of five cases, all or almost all CASA volunteer recommendations are successful.

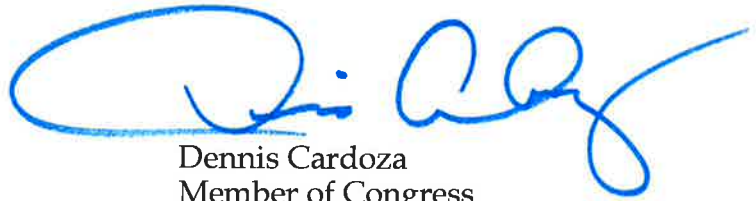
We know the costs to children when they languish in the child welfare system: difficulty in school; increased likelihood of mental health and substance abuse problems; and increased involvement in the juvenile justice system. Children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, and half as likely to reenter care. These outcomes are not only good for children, but they are also good for the bottom line. When CASA volunteers help children find a safe, permanent placement, it costs federal and state governments less.

We know these are tough budgetary times and difficult decisions will have to be made. However, an investment in CASA is not only fiscally responsible; it is also the right thing to do for our children in foster care. These children are the responsibility of the government, in the interim that they have been removed from their homes for their safety and protection. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your continued support of CASA's important work.

Sincerely,



Pete Stark
Member of Congress



Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress



Geoff Davis
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Mike Ross
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



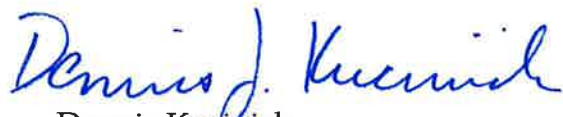
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich
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Russ Carnahan
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Bobby Scott
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Jim Costa
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Grace Napolitano
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Shelley Berkley
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